

North Atlantic Right Whale Sighting Survey (NARWSS)  
and  
Right Whale Sighting Advisory System (RWSAS)

2005 Results Summary

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OVERVIEW: The North Atlantic Right Whale Sighting Survey (NARWSS) is a NOAA Fisheries Service program dedicated to locating and recording the seasonal distribution of right whales off the northeastern United States. The Right Whale Sighting Advisory System (RWSAS) is designed to reduce collisions between ships and right whales by alerting mariners to the presence of these whales via fax, email, the internet, Broadcast Notice to Mariners (BNM), NOAA Weather Radio and the Mandatory Ship Reporting system (MSR). Sighting reports are obtained from a variety of sources including the NARWSS, whale research organizations, whale watches, the US Coast Guard, fishing vessels, commercial ships and the general public. The results of both programs' efforts in 2005 are summarized in the following tables and figures.

NARWSS TABLE 1: Summarizes the number of flight hours completed in each month that the surveys were conducted by NARWSS during 2005. There were four primary types of surveys flown: broadscale, focused surveys in the Great South Channel (GSC) Critical Habitat, focused surveys over potential and realized Dynamic Area Management (DAM) closure zones, and focused surveys in a designated Navy bombing range located over Cashes Ledge, referred to as W-104B. Broadscale surveys were flown along systematic east-west tracklines that covered all Federal waters west of the Hague line from south of Long Island, New York, to Eastport, Maine. These surveys were flown to provide a synoptic view of right whale distribution; a completed series indicates coverage of the entire area. Surveys focused on the GSC served the dual purpose of providing relatively current locations of right whale aggregations to commercial shipping traffic and high photographic recapture rates of individuals for vital rate models of the population. DAM confirmation flights included flights made to investigate reported sightings of right whale aggregations outside existing closures, as well as monitoring aggregations' duration of residence within established DAM zones. Focused surveys in W-104B were conducted by NARWSS in cooperation with the Navy prior to scheduled bombing exercises to determine the presence or absence of marine mammals and sea turtles. Additional focused flights not categorized in the table were flights to relocate reported whale carcasses or entangled whales as well as provide support for disentanglement efforts.

NARWSS FIGURE 1: Summarizes all NARWSS survey tracklines (thin lines) and right whale sighting locations (bullseyes) for 2005. Seasonal right whale closure areas in effect during each period are shown as bold lines. The duration for each closure area is as follows: Cape Cod Bay January 1<sup>st</sup> - May 15<sup>th</sup>; Great South Channel April 1<sup>st</sup> - June 30<sup>th</sup>; Seasonal Area Management (SAM) West March 1<sup>st</sup> - April 30<sup>th</sup>; Seasonal Area Management (SAM) East May 1<sup>st</sup> - July 31<sup>st</sup>.

SAS TABLE 1: Summarizes the number of reports by reporting source and notes all late and unconfirmed reports. Alerts were not made for unconfirmed reports. Reports of 1-2 right whales were not broadcasted if the report was received more than one day after the sighting. Late reports of greater than 2 whales did generate an alert since it was likely the location would continue to be occupied by right whales,. Often sightings were combined into a single alert. A total of 107 alerts were broadcasted in 2005.

RWSAS FIGURE 1a: Illustrates the total number of reports received by source for each month of 2005 covering all sightings from Maine through New York. RWSAS FIGURE 1b: Shows the same for all sightings from New Jersey through North Carolina.

RWSAS FIGURE 2: Plots all sightings received by the RWSAS in 2005 in the northeast region, excluding unconfirmed reports. The number of whales reported in each sighting and the reporting source is depicted by graduated symbols. The shipping lanes, Hague line and Cape Cod Bay and Great South Channel Critical Habitat areas are included for reference.

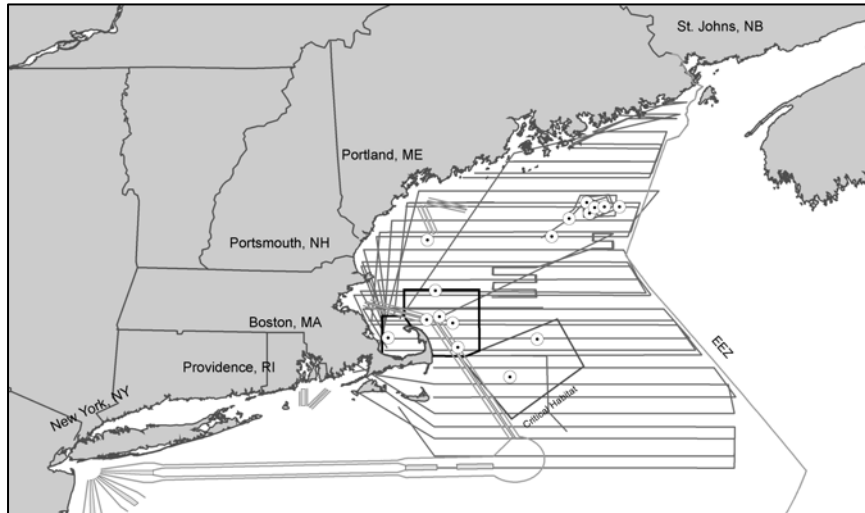
NARWSS TABLE 1

Month in 2005	Flight hours	Systematic broadscale flights *	Systematic broadscale series completed	Critical habitat surveys	DAM surveys	Cashes Ledge (W-104B)	# Right whales sighted **
January	57	8	0	0	2	0	45
February	35	11	1	0	1	1	0
March	50	14	1	0	0	1	15
April	73	17	2	1	0	0	144
May	77	12	1	1	2	0	200
June	56	6	1	1	0	1	146
July	76	11	1	1	0	0	242
August	39	5	1	1	2	0	0
September	47	9	2	0	0	0	2
October	26	6	1	0	0	0	3
November	36	7	0	0	0	0	2
December	45	8	2	0	0	0	32
<b>Totals</b>	<b>617</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>831</b>

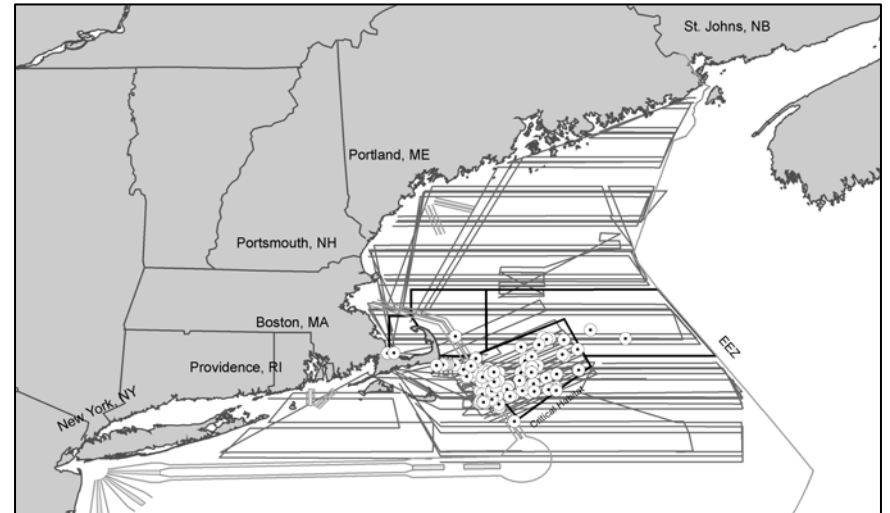
\* Flights that included both systematic broadscale and management survey time were counted as broadscale flights.

\*\* The number of right whales sighted is a tally of estimated group sizes, not the number of unique individuals identified from photographs.

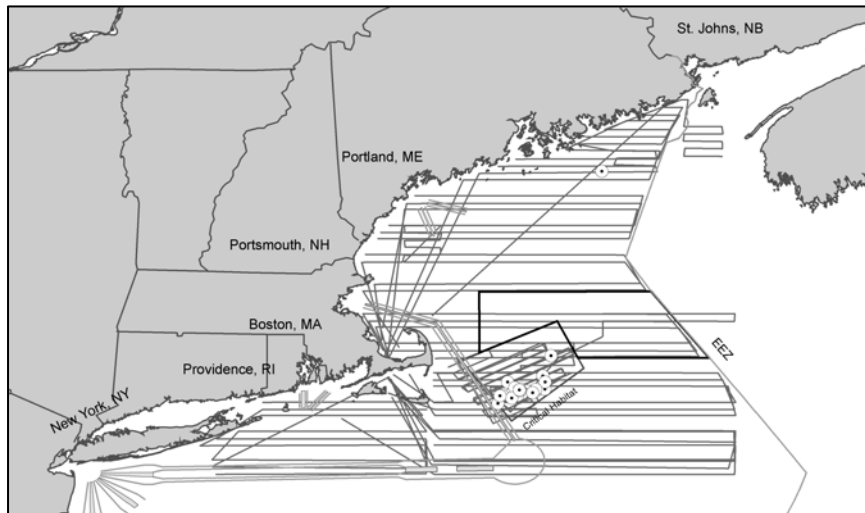
# NARWSS FIGURE 1



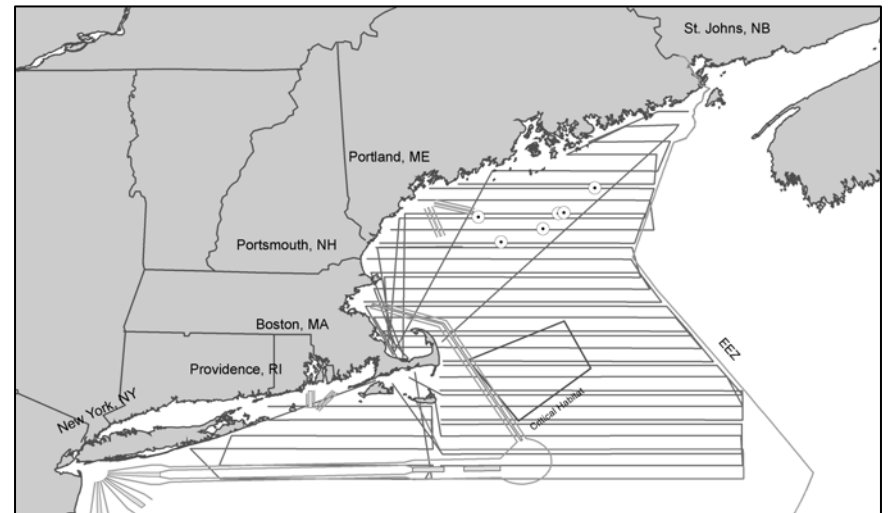
January - March 2005



April - June 2005



July - September 2005



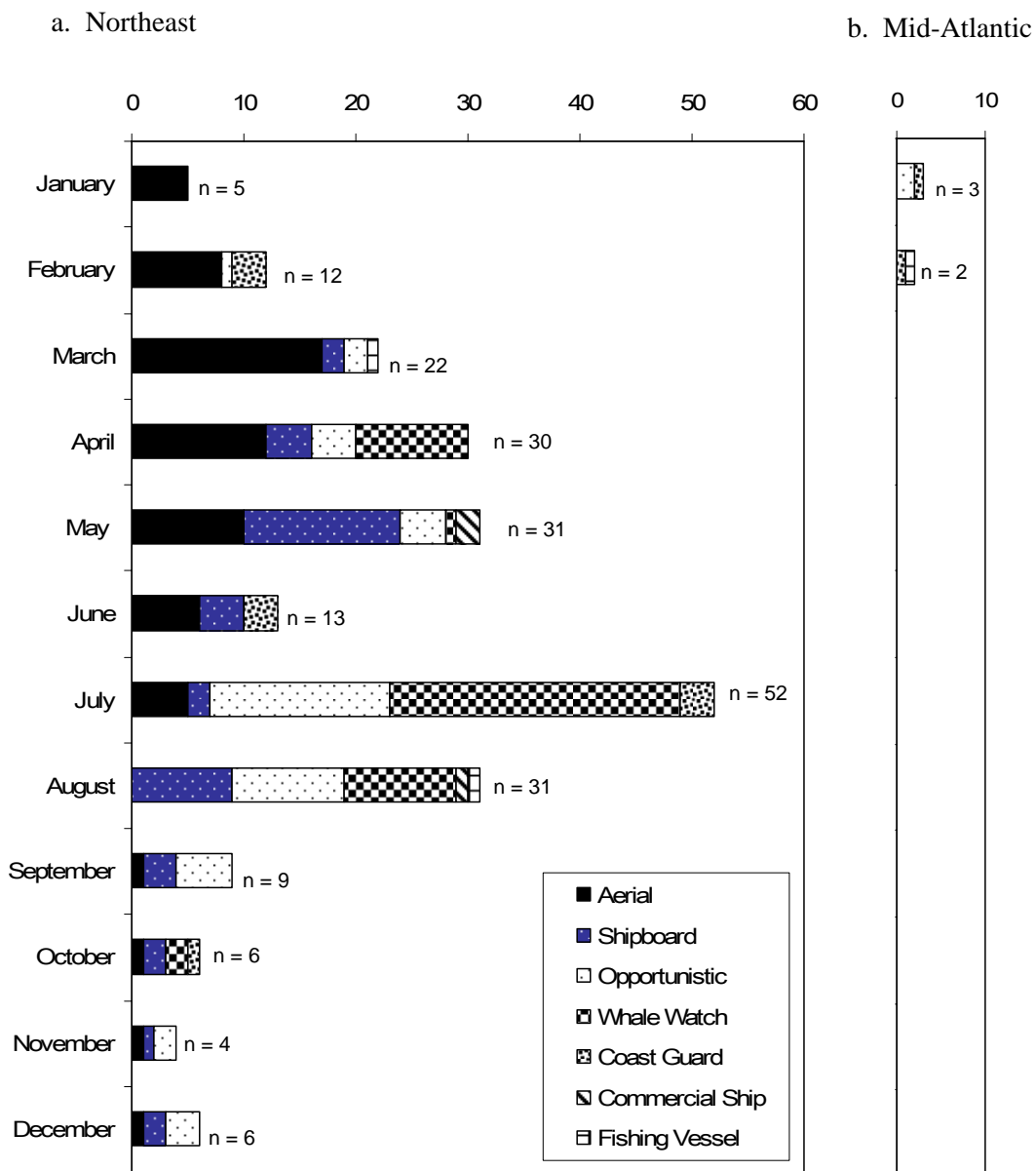
October-December 2005

RWSAS TABLE 1

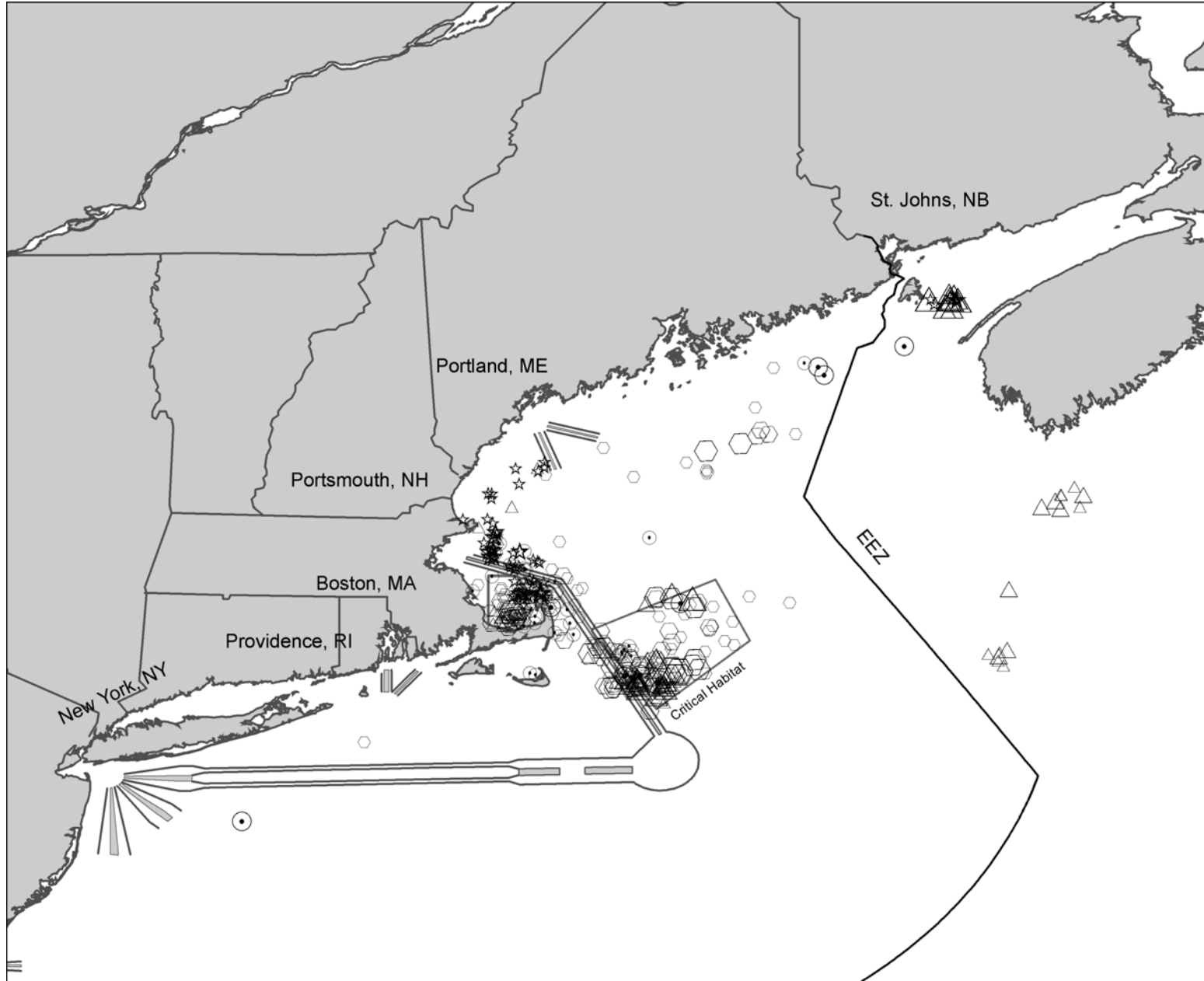
Platform	# of Reports	Unconfirmed	Late*
Aerial Survey	67	0	0
Shipboard Survey	43	0	7
Opportunistic	49	4	7
Whale Watch	49	0	3
Coast Guard	12	0	3
Commercial Ship	3	1	1
Fishing Vessel	3	0	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>

\*Reports of 1-2 right whales were not broadcasted if the report was received more than one day after the sighting.

RWSAS FIGURE 1



RWSAS FIGURE 2



**Aerial**

- 1 - 2
- ◐ 3 - 10
- ◑ 11 - 50
- ◒ 51 - 72

**Shipboard**

- △ 1 - 2
- ◀ 3 - 10
- ◁ 11 - 50
- ▴ 51 - 120

**Whale Watch**

- ☆ 1 - 2
- ★ 3 - 10
- ☆☆ 11 - 20

**Opportunistic,  
Coast Guard,  
Commerical Ship  
& Fishing Vessel**

- ◉ 1 - 2
- ◐ 3 - 20
- ◑ 21 - 50